

# Introduction

By Stephen Allen

Head of Learning and Programmes, National Museums Scotland

Our **Big Ideas** programme gives senior secondary students the chance to debate current issues in the context of Scotland's National Collections, to hear from high profile speakers, and to network with other schools. Events focus on broad curriculum topics such as citizenship, international development and climate change. The trusted neutrality of the National Museum of Scotland makes it a great venue for young people to come together and discuss issues that matter to them.

**Scotland in the 21st Century: A Changing Nation?** took place in June 2013. Students considered how Scotland is changing and what effects those changes may have on our culture, economy, communities, and landscape. Chaired by award-winning writer and broadcaster Lesley Riddoch, the day included talks, workshop sessions and a Q&A with speakers.

This report of the conference proceedings gives a snapshot from 2013 of the views of 200 young people on the issue of Scotland's future. We hope that this learning resource will help facilitate further discussion in the classroom. It includes:

- **Scotland 2020**, a film of interviews with students from Biggar High School, James Gillespie's High School and Inverkeithing High School, recorded prior to the conference.
- **Talks and discussion points.** Talks are presented verbatim and edited due to space constraints.
  - Professor Michael Keating: What does independence mean?
  - Dr Gerry Hassan: Stories of Scotland's past, present and future
  - Andy Wightman: Who runs Scotland? Elite rule and radical democracy
  - Emily Shaw MSYP: Why is this vote important to young people?
- **Appendix 1** : Pupils' comments on the day
- **Appendix 2** : Workshop responses: What do you want Scotland in 2020 to look like?
- **Appendix 3** : Key objects from the National Collections and what they tell us about the story of Scotland



## Participants

**Auchmuty High School**  
Fife

**Biggar High School**  
South Lanarkshire

**Broughton High School**  
Edinburgh

**Coatbridge High School**  
North Lanarkshire

**Greenfaulds High School**  
North Lanarkshire

**Inverkeithing High School**  
Fife

**National Museums Scotland** is the country's national museum service and houses a wealth of treasures representing more than two centuries of collecting. Collections take in everything from Scottish and classical archaeology, to decorative and applied arts, from world cultures and social history to science, technology and the natural world.

We also provide advice, expertise and support to the wider community, creating a first class service that informs, educates and inspires. It achieves this by offering a packed programme of exhibitions and events at four national museums and draws in more than two million visitors a year.

**James Gillespies High School**  
Edinburgh

**St Joseph's College**  
Dumfries

**St Mary's Music School**  
Edinburgh

**St Maurice's High School**  
North Lanarkshire

**Woodmill High School**  
Fife

It delivers a programme of outreach and partnership projects, taking collections across the country into schools and providing special loans to other museums.

The views or opinions presented in this report are solely those of the participants in the event, **Scotland in the 21st Century: A Changing Nation?** and do not necessarily represent those of National Museums Scotland.

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## Introductory remarks

**Lesley Riddoch, Chair**

[www.LesleyRiddoch.com](http://www.LesleyRiddoch.com) @LesleyRiddoch

“ I’ve lived in every part of the United Kingdom, but I think my background and my culture is very Scottish, and as I’ve got older I’ve been able to see that, because you compare how you are when you go to other places, with what you find there. A recent poll said only 21% of young people who could vote in the referendum want independence. It’s quite close to how people saw themselves – were they Scottish, were they British? How people feel culturally will be something we’ll tackle today.

When we’re looking at the question of independence, it’s kind of a big deal for us, it’s something that hasn’t happened in any of our lifetimes, but actually, in Ireland there was an independence struggle, and it was a very bloody one. It sits in the back of people’s minds here when they think about independence, because it’s the only one we’ve been taught about. I have been looking at some of the other countries that are our neighbours, because Norway, for the folk who live in the north of Scotland, was actually the country that ran them for a long time. Norway became independent in 1905 and it was quite a whole-hearted movement. There are many different ways things can go, and today is going to try and look at both sides of the argument.

I was involved in a marine energy project for three years, which was looking at the whole of Europe. Scotland has unbelievable potential in this area. Everybody in this room should consider becoming

*“There is nothing in life that is actually black or white, you’ll have a balance of interests...”*

a marine engineer because it’s the future! At the moment you can expand renewable energy projects if you know you’re going to get the money for the energy. And the difficulty is that the way energy is charged, it gets charged higher the further away from the people you are. It’s really trying to make sure that power stations are located beside big cities, not away off in the blue yonder, because you lose energy on the way. What that means is that renewable energy costs a lot to enter the grid, and that’s the reason that some islands like Orkney and Shetland, which are awash with green energy, are not actually contributing to the grid at the moment, because they can’t afford to make the connection. Those rules are UK rules, and they’re created by Ofgen and Ofgen is based in the south of England. If

you were to put up a power station in Hyde Park you would be given a £30 subsidy for every watt of energy you produce. You have to pay to join the grid in the remote areas of Scotland because of that pricing regime. On the other hand people say the reason we have investment in green energy is because we’re part of a huge market at the moment in the UK. If we were on our own, England, which is the largest set of customers, could choose to take its energy from somewhere else. So we could have all that energy and we might not be able to supply it, then we’d have a problem. You get arguments on both sides as to whether it would make more sense or less sense which way you go.

You should demand answers until you understand the balance. And each time, there will be a balance. There is nothing in life that is actually black and white, you’ll have a balance of interests, and you’ll hear that today.”

**Lesley is one of Scotland’s best known commentators and broadcasters. She writes weekly columns for the *The Scotsman* and *The Sunday Post* and is a regular contributor to *The Guardian* and *Newsnight Scotland*. Lesley has won awards for her programmes on BBC Radio 4, BBC Radio 2 and BBC Radio Scotland. She’s also committed to making Scotland a better place for its communities. A founding member of the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust, which led to the successful community buy-out in 1997, Lesley also chaired the taskforce on Rum in 2008, to transfer control of assets to the local community.**



# What does independence mean?

**Professor Michael Keating**

[www.abdn.ac.uk](http://www.abdn.ac.uk)

Michael is Chair in Scottish Politics at the University of Aberdeen. His research interests include European politics, nationalism and public policy. He published *The Independence of Scotland* in 2009. Michael is director of the Scottish Centre for Constitutional Change ([www.futureukandscotland.ac.uk](http://www.futureukandscotland.ac.uk)), a consortium which is examining the issues arising from the Scottish constitutional debate.

“ I have a lifelong interest in questions about identity, independence, states and nationalities, but it’s not really given me any answers unfortunately. I don’t know what independence means. The fact is that independence is a very, very complicated thing. It has multiple dimensions and I just want to sketch out some of the meanings of that.

## A simple question?

The referendum question itself is fairly simple. In fact, it’s a very simple question: should Scotland be an independent country: yes or no? We at least have a very straightforward question, but the problem is, it’s not at all clear exactly what that means, because in the modern world independence is not a straightforward concept. What does independence mean? In one sense it’s straightforward: you become an independent country, you run your own affairs, you have no external authority telling you what to do and you can just pursue any kind of social and economic policies you want to. The alternative is to have devolution, which is what we’ve got at the moment, where Scotland has certain things that it can do on its own, but other things, including the really big things – foreign affairs, taxation, pensions, the social security system – which Westminster retains.

## Independence in Europe?

That is the simple legal position, but in practice it’s much more complicated. What does independence mean in practice? What are you going to be asked to vote on? Well, it’s independence, but we’ll stay in the European Union. I think it’s a great achievement, to be in this wider system of Europe, which provides broader markets, human rights guarantees, all sorts of things that we need. But it’s not independence in its classic sense, because you’ve got the European Central Bank, you’ve got the Council of Ministers, you’ve got the European Commission in Brussels. They run a lot of important policies. They run agriculture, competition policies, whole swathes of economic and environmental policies which are decided in Brussels, and we’ve got to go there in order to make the policies and make our weight felt. That’s fine, but it’s not independence in its

traditional sense. We’re seeing that some of the smaller countries in the European Union are clearly not independent. According to the referendum prospectus, we’ll remain in NATO. Again, fine, I don’t think we can defend ourselves, we have to be part of a broader defence structure, but it means that we don’t have one of the more traditional things independent countries have, which is the right to run our own defence policies, because we have a collective defence policy.

## Money matters

We’re also told that if we vote ‘yes’ we’ll keep the pound. Again, there may be good reason for doing this, but it’s becoming increasingly obvious as this debate unfolds that this is not independence in the classic sense either, because if you share your currency with another country, that limits what you can do in relation to economic policy. We’ve seen in the Eurozone countries that they have to obey very strict rules about their budgets, their deficits, their debts, their taxation policies. So if we share a currency with another country, then we don’t run our own monetary policy, we don’t determine our own taxes, we have to negotiate those with somebody else. And what we’ve seen from the experience of the Euro, is that having a single money leads to increased integration, increased coordination of policies, again, reducing the meaning of independence.

We’re told that we will keep the social union, we’ll keep the social welfare system. This is being described as ‘independence lite’. It’s not independence in its traditional sense because that doesn’t exist in the modern world. It’s a limited form of independence.

Independence doesn’t mean one single thing, it means a lot of different things. It means control of specific policy areas, and in particular it’s about control of economic policy and the big social policy decisions.

## Independence lite or devolution max?

What does a ‘no’ vote mean? It may just mean, we’ll carry on as we are at present. But the parties are saying they think there’s a demand for more. The Liberal Democrats have produced a proposal about federalism, the Labour Party has established a commission, the Conservative Party has established a commission. They’re thinking about giving more powers to Scotland. And this is what’s come to be known as ‘devolution max’.

So what does ‘devolution max’ mean? Well, we could have control of all our taxes. At the moment we only control a small bit of our taxes. We could have control over some of the big welfare decisions: pensions, unemployment benefits, family support. At present

*“These debates are taking place in many different nations across Europe and across the world... people refuse to make this old-fashioned distinction between being independent and not being independent.”*

they tend to be run from Westminster. You could decentralise them and then you’ve got a range of economic and social powers – levers that we didn’t have before. And the advantage of this is that you could then tailor policies more clearly to Scotland’s needs. If we want higher taxes and more spending, we can do it. It is likely in fact, that Scotland in the long run will go for higher levels of public spending for all kinds of reasons. The implication is that we’ll have to pay more taxes. This would give us quite a bit more power to do things in our own way.

It’s increasingly difficult to tell the difference between ‘independence lite’ and ‘devolution max’, because both of them seem to recognise that we can take control of certain kinds of things. But there are other things that we’re never going to control because we will have to live with the nations of these islands, we’ll have to live with the rest of Europe, we’ll have to live with the rest of the world, we’ve got NATO, we’ve got the European Union. What matters then is not necessarily the formal status of being independent, but exactly what powers you need to do what kinds of things.

## An international debate

Scotland is not the only place having this debate. These debates are taking place in many different nations across Europe and across the world. Consistently, the evidence shows that people refuse to make this old-fashioned distinction between being independent and not being independent. Citizens want to know what powers they’re going to have to make, what kinds of choices, what kind of society they want.

The irony is, we have a debate between two sides: the Unionists are saying, ‘Keep the union, independence will be a total disaster’. The Nationalists are saying, ‘No, we need to become

independent because we won’t have the powers without independence’. And the citizens are tending to say, ‘Well, let’s clarify this debate. Exactly what powers do we want, to do what kinds of things?’ And both sides are recognising that we’re in a world where states are not independent, but they are *inter-dependent*, that is that they are always nested within broader unions. Some states are more powerful than others. Some are bigger than others. Some have different social and economic projects to others. But the question is: how can we relate to that world? How can we endow ourselves with the powers that are needed to confront this international world which is changing so rapidly? And then, what are the constitutional implications for this? What are you offering and what difference will it make to our lives and to the wellbeing of the nation? ”

## Talking points

- Independence doesn’t mean one single thing, it means a lot of different things and in particular it’s about control of economic policy and the big social policy decisions.
- Both sides, Yes and No, are recognising that we’re in a world where states are not independent but they are inter-dependent. Some states are more powerful than others. The question is: how can we endow ourselves with the powers that are needed to confront this international world which is changing so rapidly?
- It’s increasingly difficult to tell the difference between ‘independence lite’ and ‘devolution max’, because both of them seem to recognise that we can take control of certain kinds of things. But there are other things that we’re never going to control eg the European Union, NATO.
- Scotland is just one of a number of nations around the world having this debate eg the Basque country, Catalonia, Québec.

# Stories of Scotland's past, present and future

**Dr Gerry Hassan**

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**Dr Gerry Hassan is a writer, researcher, policy analyst and broadcaster who has worked on a range of Scottish, UK and international subjects. He is the author or editor of more than a dozen books, including *The Modern SNP: From Protest to Power* and *After Blair: Politics after the New Labour Decade*. He is also an associate at the cross-party think-tank, Demos.**

“ I’m going to talk a wee bit about tomorrow’s Scotland and do three simple things: first, establish that there’s a link between the past and the present and the future; second, talk about story; third, discuss the connection of our individual stories, your individual stories, to our collective stories as a nation and a society.

The first thing I’m going to talk about is the importance of story. This is one of my favourite books of the last few years, this

guy Christopher Booker’s *Seven Basic Plots*. He spent 34 years writing this book, he started in 1969 and ended it in 2003. What he basically argues in it is that there are a finite number of stories in the world. He says seven stories. What’s great about this book is he argues that underneath the seven stories, there’s actually one unifying story of the human race. And he says that one story is basically the search of the human race for light, for hope, and the power of the pull of darkness. Evil attracts us. He poses a great argument where he says this is the reason *Star Wars* is so popular, this is the reason the Nazis, who people study endlessly in history, will always be with us as these powerful, near-perfect villains.

I want to turn to personal stories. I take the view that who we are, how we have rational views of things and opinions isn’t basically about rationalism, it’s made up of our background, our parents, friends, family, and a whole pile of subjective things. I grew up in Dundee. We lived in a tower block. My mother used to take great exception when people used to say on television in the 1970s, that people living in multi-storey blocks were unhappy and isolated, because she knew nearly everyone. She even wrote to the *Parkinson* show once, complaining about their view about tower blocks. This is a story of Scotland that has some power, some potency for some of us: my Dad bought a council house on the side of the Law in Dundee. Dundee used to be filled, like lots of Scotland, with council houses, and he got this great discount deal, he had to borrow a couple of thousand pounds, which he thought was a fortune, to buy this. It didn’t change any of his views of the world, he still remained adamantly left-wing and pro Scottish independence, but he owned his council house. And what I want to draw from this is a couple

of things: growing up in that era of the 1970s, it was a time of optimism. My parents, their friends, their families, they had had the backdrop of the decades of the 50s, the 60s, rising living standards, feeling life was getting better, fairer, etc, and they believed in something that they didn’t even put a name to. Basically, they believed in the future. They believed they could shape the future and that it was going to be better for them and better for their kids. Kids wouldn’t have the same jobs or lack of opportunities that they had had to put up with. But it’s also true in that period of the mid-to-late 1970s, elements of doubt and uncertainty were beginning to creep into that positive view of the world. There were public spending cuts, the world was getting more uncertain, there was a big war in the Middle East and the oil price went up, and British unemployment went up because of this. And I think that this all has to be understood. What my parents believed in when they believed in the future was, they actually believed in the stories of Britain. They believed in Britain as a state, they believed in it as vehicle of progress, they believed in it as an idea. There are of course many

*“How do we make self-government not just about politics, How do we widen democracy, and how do we recognise the missing voices?”*

stories of Britain. There’s obviously the one that we all know – the British Empire, when one quarter of the world was red. But there are many other stories. A story lots of people grew up with is Labour winning the election in 1945 and establishing the welfare state and the NHS. To some people this is still really central. Ken Loach’s *Spirit of 1945* is a film which eulogises that post-war collective effort. We have to ask, is that the story of Britain now? We’ve had Thatcher, we’ve had Blair, isn’t that just a nostalgia for a bygone age? Deep history to you basically, that we can’t retrieve.

## Stories of modern Scotland

We then come to the stories of modern Scotland. For some this is the prevalent story of modern Scotland: the independence referendum, the fact we have a place on the international stage. But there are lots of other stories – artistic and cultural Scotland, land, power and ownership. And of course there’s one of the most powerful stories, emotionally of Scotland

– the sporting nation? (with a question mark). We seem to love football and watching it, but we're not very good at playing it.

What I want to take from this is, who's telling our stories? Who has a voice and who doesn't have a voice, because there's something profound going on here about the silences of parts of Scotland. We are a profoundly unequal society. Some people said in those films, 'Scotland's just fine as it is.' Is it? Is that right? It is for lots of us, but not for all of us. What issues and areas do we still have problems discussing, if any?

This brings to the issue of the future. A prevalent way of looking at the future is to talk about technology. It's been a prevalent view of technology ever since we started making intricate machinery, of talking about robots, flying cars etc, that the robots are either going to save us or they're coming to control us. The UN at the moment are talking about what to do with robotic armies. Because eventually, if they become autonomous, they start running the planet. And these are some of the fundamental questions we're going to have to ask, ethically, about the future.

## How different do we want Scotland to be?

I want to ask an even more fundamental one: whose future? Whose values? One Scottish future is this – this is the one that emphasises the constitutional question, politics, and the difference between Scotland and England. Is this enough of a story for modern Scotland? I think it raises big questions about the nature of Scotland, our values, and priorities, and are we this nice land that looks after its poor and looks after its vulnerable, or have we told ourselves some stories that are a bit comforting?

It brings us to the issue of how different do we want Scotland to be? Is independence versus the union question the right question? Or is the actual question this: what kind of Scotland do we want? Do we want a fairer Scotland? And if so, there are massive choices and trade offs in that. How do we make self-government not just about politics? How do we widen democracy if we want to, and how do we recognise the missing voices? How will your generation's individual stories feed into a different set of collective stories? We've told one set so far about Scotland being different, and Britain being a

bit of a problem, maybe not a complete problem, maybe we can all live together. But is that something that's going to continue, or will a new story, something cyclical, emerge?

## More than politics

I don't think tomorrow's Scotland should be or will be completely about politics and politicians. It's about culture, it's about positive activity, about creativity, it's about debating who we are. It's about things like the power of psychology, not just about institutions and structures. It's about cultural change and how we adapt to this world of independence and inter-dependence and what that makes us.

To conclude, the future is about how we choose to live our lives, it's about the values we have and how we tell the stories, how we share them. ”

### Talking points

- Is independence versus the union question the right question?
- For some the independence referendum is the prevalent story of modern Scotland, but there are lots of other stories – artistic and cultural Scotland, sporting Scotland, land, power and ownership.
- How different do we want Scotland to be? Do we want a fairer Scotland? How do we make self-government not just about politics?
- Scotland's fine as it is for lots of us, but not for all of us. We are a profoundly unequal society. Who is marginalised, and what issues do we still have problems discussing?
- How do we widen democracy, if we want to, and how do we recognise the missing voices?

# Who runs Scotland? Elite rule and radical democracy

**Andy Wightman**

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Andy was born in Dundee and grew up in Kinross. He gained a degree in forestry at Aberdeen University. He worked as a ghillie, environmental scientist, and an environmental campaigner before becoming a self-employed writer and researcher in 1993. Andy is a prominent writer and researcher on land rights and democracy. He is the author of several books, including *Who Owns Scotland* and *The Poor Had No Lawyers*.

“ I’m going to be talking about a few ideas about power.

I’m not really going to be talking about independence – in fact, most of the stuff I’m going to be talking about, it’s irrelevant whether we’re independent, whether we’re what we are now, or whether we end up with a few more powers. It’s about the country you live in, and how much of a stake you have in it, and how much control and influence you have in who runs it.

This is a map of the north of Edinburgh about 100 years ago,

when three people ran the north of Edinburgh: the Duke of Buccleuch, Mr Ramsay, and Mr Boswell. Of course lots of people live in the north of Edinburgh now. That’s a big process of change. So, thinking for the new Scotland, what we need is fresh thinking, new thinking, radical thinking, different thinking. Be different! Challenge the claims made by those in power! Don’t believe the stories you get spun!

I grew up in Dundee. I grew up in a big house. My father was an architect and his firm rented this house, we just lived in a wee flat at the top, and the rest of it was all drawing offices. It was a beautiful house, but it was then bought by the City Council, and they demolished it, and they built what is now Dundee University. So the places where we live, when we go back to them 20, 30 years later, they’ll be different, because people have made changes, sometimes for the better, sometimes for the worse.

I then moved to Kinross. If you go to Kinross today, the town hall is boarded up, riddled with dry rot, it’s for sale. This was a building that was built by the people of Kinross, they raised the money by public subscription to build it after the First World War in memory of the people who died. And in the town hall we used to have concerts and folk festivals, and we used to have dances out in the street, and we won Britain in Bloom three times, we had an agricultural show. It was a great wee place to live in. Now you go to these places, and there are many of them across Scotland, some of them you might live in, all a wee bit depressed now, all a wee bit down-at-heel.

## How do we make a difference?

I want to talk about how to make a difference. When I left school, I went to work as a ghillie, which is gaelic for ‘boy’. I was a pony man, my job was to go out with my pony called ‘Brandy’. And rich people would come and hunt, and kill, and shoot deer, and my job was to take the deer home on the back of the pony. As a result of that I met all sorts of very interesting people, such as the De Beers diamond family, who I’d sit out on the hill with whilst they were waiting for the wind to change or something, and have very interesting conversations with them. So all through life, take the opportunity to speak to people and have new experiences and learn more.

Recently I wrote a book, *The Poor Had No Lawyers*, and on the cover is this ruined house. About 120 years ago there were about 20 houses in this little village called Ardoch in Glengairn in Aberdeenshire. There was a school, there was a shop, there were two churches. They all disappeared, because the people there did not have any security of tenure, they were there on a year-to-year basis, they were tenants. When they passed the Crofting Acts in 1886 giving security to small peasant farmers in Scotland, they restricted it to the Highlands. Aberdeenshire wasn’t included, and so today these places lie abandoned. And there are a lot of places across Scotland with a lot of potential, for people to live in, to work in, to play in. And one of the reasons we don’t live the dreams is because there are power structures there that get in the way. For example: the law, which has been framed historically to protect those who have, rather than empower those who haven’t.

*“...we need fresh thinking, new thinking, radical thinking. Be different!”*

It’s also worth remembering that Scotland is a place of great hope and potential. Scotland is a really big country. Most of Scotland is wet, with potential for marine renewable energy. And that’s all owned by the Crown, and managed by a body in London called The Crown Estate. And they’re about power, because they deal with things like ferries and harbours, from an office in London. And that’s about power and who controls these waters, and who should control them, and who should make decisions about these places.

## Who owns the moon?

I don't actually own any land, but I do own a wee bit of land on the moon. There's a wee cross up there in the Oceanus Procellarum, which I bought for £12.50 in Safeway a few years ago. And this is my Title Deed. I own a bit of the moon. But do I really own the moon? Who owns the moon? Nobody owns the moon. After the Second World War, we signed a treaty, in 1967: the Outer Space Treaty, saying nobody shall be able to claim ownership of the moon and the stars and the things that fly around earth. It was the Cold War then, when the USA and the Soviet Union were pointing missiles at each other, and there was a real fear, because the Soviets were first into space, that they would militarise it, put weapons up there. So we got a treaty signed saying we should only use space for peaceful purposes. The problem now of course is that there are big American corporations who have noticed that there are asteroids flying around in space with more platinum on them than in the whole of planet earth. Platinum is very valuable. An asteroid with more platinum than the whole of planet earth is incredibly valuable, and we've now got the potential to go there and get these things. And in fact NASA has just announced that their second launch pad at Cape Canaveral is being leased to the private sector. So there are big American corporations wanting to rip up this treaty and basically start owning outer space.

Who owns Scotland? Who owns the land? It's a very, very good question. When you're anywhere, in a town, in a city, in a house, in a building, in a factory, in the countryside, ask yourself: who owns this? Sometimes it's the aristocracy. You are the first generation since 1930 which is predicted to grow up poorer than your parents. The over 50s have accumulated a vast amount of wealth. They've stolen it from you. And they've stored it all up in housing, which is just about land prices, because houses decline in value because they erode and you need to maintain them. Housing is a massive issue, and that's a land issue. It's about power. Who controls this? Who controls the money supply? How much money you can borrow? Who controls house prices, and how many houses can be built?

## People power

In many parts of Scotland communities are getting together and doing things for themselves. The islanders on Gigha bought out the landowner and they now own the island. And now they're generating their own electricity from wind turbines. Their school role has increased from about 10 to about 30.

You have it within your gift to do an awful lot of stuff to change Scotland, to change the place you live, regardless of whether it's independent or not. And so governance is important. How we're governed, who rules the country etc. For example, this is an exercise they did in Brighton, with planning applications: 'I propose to take the large statue of Queen Victoria on Grand Avenue down and replace it with a pregnant Adele.' Heaps of these planning notices went around town and people started saying, 'A pregnant Adele? Replace the statue of Queen Victoria?' And they got engaged in the process, which was very interesting. It's worth remembering as well that we've got very, very little in the way of local government. Never mind about Holyrood and independence, we've only got 32 councils in the country, with over 100,000 people in each one. Countries like Spain and Italy, and France and Germany have got thousands and thousands, and a lot of the decisions that are made on a day-to-day basis are made in places like where I grew up, in Kinross, at local level. And again, it's at your local level that you can make most of a difference, and help shape the future of Scotland in 2020.

## Knowledge is power

That's really all I want to say: be aware that there are power structures out there that you need to understand. It's not good enough simply to waltz through life accepting everything. A lot of this boils down to knowledge – what you know. Understand these political processes and never stop asking why? ”

## Talking points

- Independence or not is irrelevant to the big questions of how much of a stake you have in your country, and how much control and influence you have in who owns it and who runs it.
- It's at your local level that you can make most of a difference, and help shape the future of Scotland in 2020.
- Who owns Scotland? Who owns the land? When you're anywhere, in a town, in a city, in a house, in a building, in a factory, in the countryside, ask yourself: who owns this?

# Why is this vote important to young people?

**Emily Shaw MYSP**

[www.emilyshawshetlandmysp.com](http://www.emilyshawshetlandmysp.com)

Emily has been representing young Shetlanders as their Member of the Scottish Youth Parliament since March 2011. She is the Chairperson of Shetland Youth Voice and is passionate about representing young people. More recently she became Scotland's new UK Young Ambassador.

“ At 20 years old, I'm not that much older than the majority of you here. I was elected as the Scottish Youth Parliament representative for Shetland when I was 18, and later on was elected onto the Board of Directors, which just means that there are seven of us who make decisions about what the organisation does, and how we can represent young people effectively. I'm

passionate about youth engagement, and that's how I got involved with the UK Young Ambassadors programme, which essentially is kind of like what I do in Scotland, but on a European level. We have quite interesting discussions, with the independence debate, because we have one representative from each UK country and we go to international presidencies, with government members from EU countries, and we talk about what the priorities for young people are: how are you engaging with young people in your countries? Are you doing it properly? Can we help you out with that? The first thing I want to say is that we've been talking a lot about resources and how we can make sure we use them in Scotland leading up to 2020, whether we're independent or not. I think that our young people are our greatest resource and we need to make sure that we are using them to the best of their ability and to the benefit of our country.

## Politics is a dirty word

I want to explain why the referendum is so important to you guys as young people. And I also want to talk about Votes at 16, because it's been a prominent campaign for the Scottish Youth Parliament. I was so inspired watching the video that we saw earlier. I thought that the way in which those young people expressed their views, in such an articulate and mature manner is just one example of how engaged and switched on young people are across the country. And when I say we're engaged, I don't mean politically engaged. Politics is sometimes a word that is a little bit dangerous – people tend to switch off when they hear it. But essentially we are just a generation that is aware of the issues our country is facing. And as we heard, we all have our own ideas on how to tackle the big issues that are facing us. And I think it's important that they're listened to.

The film was just a glimpse of the wider attitude that can be found amongst young people all over the country. I think that this ability to express ourselves is something that we need to be celebrating, which is what today is kind of about for me. And it's definitely a reason to facilitate discussion involving the young and the old in the run up to the vote on 18 September 2014.

## Why should you go out and vote?

Why does the vote actually matter to you? Why should you go out and vote? Why should you spend the time to make a decision on this? Well, simply put: it's *our* chance to have *our* say on the future of *our* country. It's quite well known that currently young people are notoriously under-represented. We aren't particularly listened to as much as we would like. Turnout figures for 18–25-year-olds in elections are extremely low, and there's speculation – correct or incorrect as it may be – that this trend will be replicated in the 16–18 age group that are going to be able to vote in the referendum. It can't be denied that the result of the referendum will affect our country. I believe that as a group within society we should be ensuring not only that we vote ourselves as individuals, but actually that we talk amongst and our friends and our families, and that we ensure that everybody is engaging with the debate, because it is our country and we all need to have our say in its future. It's our collective responsibility to ensure the views of our generation are heard, and actually to try and encourage turnout, because it's actually used against us as young people, that we don't vote.

## Ask the awkward questions

We saw from the film that young people have so many questions regarding the vote. I think this shows an enthusiasm and a will to engage, and to question the facts that are being put forward by both sides of the debate. We're asking questions because they are the questions that need to be asked. And no matter what your age is, there are a lot of things right now that nobody knows the answers to in relation to the referendum and independence. I think it's our responsibility to be asking the big, slightly awkward questions, because we need to be sure that we know what we're voting for.

Votes at 16 is one of the most exciting things about the referendum, something the Scottish Youth Parliament has been campaigning for for just over a decade. I think the bottom line is that we don't give the right to vote based on whether you're capable or mature, but actually whether you're

going to vote, one way or the other. You can't say that just because somebody's going to vote for the BNP, as much as you might not like that extremist view, you don't then remove that person's right to vote. If somebody's going to vote 'yes', or if somebody's going to vote 'no', that's their right to hold those views. As a 16-year-old who is going to be a very active member of society in Scotland in 2020, whether it's independent or not, you have a right to be involved in the debate and the voting of the referendum. As an organisation we're going to continue to fight this fight for all future elections. We think that if you can have the vote on the future of your country, why can't you then have the say for the government for the next parliamentary term?

## The value of youth

But regardless of whether the country votes yes or no, we, as young people, have a responsibility to ensure that it's still a place that values its youth, and it's still a place that we want to live in. Because if it's not, I really think we are going to lose our most valuable resource. I grew up in Shetland. I consider myself a Shetlander, and probably Scottish second, then after that I consider myself to be British. I understand how positive it can be when a community values its young people, because Shetland is quite a small place. We have a population of just over 22,000 people and we're quite a close community. Shetland Council invests in youth services and engagement programmes. Beneath this is this underlying attitude of, 'We like our young people, we value our young people.' And it works both ways, because a lot of young people in Shetland volunteer. It's something that's really valued. Shetland struggles to maintain its 18–25 age population because we have a limited number of degrees available on the island, so a lot of young people head down for university or employment opportunities. So we have a problem retaining that age group, which might sound like a bad thing, but actually it's resulted in us as a community really trying to hold on to the 18–25-year-olds we do have, and working hard to make sure that the younger generation know that Shetland is a really positive place for them to live. I've always known that Shetland values its young people, and I grew up feeling like a very valued member of society. It wasn't until I went to London, for a Commonwealth event, where there were young people from all over the world representing their countries, that I realised how much Scotland already values its young people. We are one of the only Commonwealth states to have a democratically elected Youth Parliament. In

our last manifesto we consulted with 42,000 young people. That's one of the biggest consultations of its kind. We are a prominent organisation and we're working extremely hard to make sure that things change for young people. There's also Young Scot, the youth information agency. And MSPs engage with Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament on a regular basis, and these Members also hold positions within committees and commissions and cross-party groups within Parliament, which means that we are having a say in the decision-making process. Having given evidence myself to Parliament, I've seen first-hand the fact that politicians do have confidence in us.

To sum up, it's clear from the video that young people need to have confidence in the ability of the Government and the strength of the economy in a future Scotland, but there's also this desire that's being expressed to increase control over policies that affect Scottish people. And they're not the only ones to have these concerns, this is something that's echoed in the older generations as well. Everybody's trying to find this balance between how far do we go towards independence, and would more powers actually be the better option? Young people are as capable of understanding the issues surrounding the 2014 vote as any other group in society. We, as a society, not just individuals, must be encouraging young people to use their vote, whether they'll use it to vote yes or no, it doesn't matter. The important thing is that you understand the importance of the vote and actually use it.



## Talking points

- Young people should be ensuring not only that they vote themselves, but also that they talk to friends and family, to ensure that everybody is engaging with the debate.
- Today's 16-year-olds are going to be active members of society in 2020, whether Scotland's independent or not. They have a right to be involved in the debate and the voting.
- It's our responsibility to be asking the big, slightly awkward questions, because we need to be sure that we know what we're voting for. We need to make sure that we are informed when going to the ballot in September.

## Appendix 1

### Pupils' comments

**Pupils were encouraged to contribute their own views by making comments from the floor following each speaker's presentation, and by submitting written comments and questions, many of which were framed in the context of the 2014 independence referendum. This is a selection of the issues raised.**

"My question would be to someone who is for the Union: what kind of vision are they giving us compared to independence?"

"An issue I have is who is going to be eligible to vote and who should be able to vote, because I see the Yes campaign like to wheel out Sean Connery to say 'Oh, Scotland should be independent', but he lives

in Spain. How does he get a say? There's a teacher in my school who's very politically aware, and he's English, but he's lived in Scotland for 10 years. Should he get a vote? Why should people who are 16 be allowed to vote? A lot of people who are 16 aren't actually politically aware. It's very rare to have as many people of our age as are in this room that are politically aware and can have arguments and can form conclusions. Because I know a lot of my friends and a lot of people I go to school with are rather ignorant to a lot of politics and are rather ignorant to the issue of independence, and really are just going on gut instinct and are going, 'Oh, I don't like the English so I'm going to vote yes,' or, 'I'm not too sure, so I'm going to vote aye'."

"I personally think that 16-year-olds are quite immature and won't really know what to think, they just think, 'Oh I'm Scottish, not British, I'm going to vote yes'."

"I would class myself as Scottish but I still don't want independence, so I don't really see where people are getting that from? I would say that we are different countries, but we are more of a union as Britain, and I'd quite like for us to stay in that union, but to remain as a Scottish identity, because we do have a different identity to Britain as a whole."

"It sort of worries me that people are still holding onto things that are hundreds of years old, like Empires, and taking over other countries. That is the past. I'm worried about this referendum. I'm worried that people are going to vote on the basis of national pride and not on the economic or social impacts that independence is going to have on this country. That's also why I'm worried about lowering the voting age to 16, people who are, of any age, who are ignorant to this, who are going to vote on the basis of national pride, and could end up winding our country into a pile of debt and misery. So if we were to get all of this stuff about hundreds of years old, 'I hate the English' and stuff, out of our minds, and vote on the basis of 'what impact will this have on our country', that would probably be the best way of doing it."



# Appendix 1

## Questions for discussion

### Independence / Devolution

If there's very little difference between independence and devolution max, why does the result of the referendum matter?

What are the disadvantages of Scotland not becoming an independent country?

Are we rushing into independence simply because the SNP get the majority vote?

As Scottish people are able to vote in the Scottish Parliament and Westminster, should English people be granted an English Parliament outwith Westminster?

### Votes at 16

Even though the government are hoping to change the voting age to 16, why do they change it for a life choice that cannot be re-elected, and not for elections which only last a few years?

Young people are ignorant towards politics, or most of them are anyway. What are the benefits of them voting if they don't know what they are voting for?

If young people's views are so important, why aren't they taken into consideration more by the people who repeatedly say our views are important?

### Oil

How will the profits from oil that has already been sold be shared with Scotland?

### University fees

My main concern is whether I will have to pay for my tuition fees in an independent Scotland. Would this be the case?

### Civil liberties

If the Yes campaign succeeds, how would my civil rights and freedoms be protected and enhanced?

### Currency

What will Scotland's currency be? A new currency, the Euro or a Eurozone-style system with rest of UK?

### NATO

Can an independent Scotland still be a member of NATO without nuclear weapons or large armed forces?

### Party politics

Should parties such as the BNP be allowed to express their extremist views as a political party? Extremist wings in religion are victimised for their views, so why can political parties hold similar extreme views?

### Economy

What economic problems would be caused if Scotland became independent?

One in four Scottish high street shops is set to close by 2018. How are we meant to be 'better together' if it hasn't worked previously?

On what basis does the Yes campaign claim there will be more jobs in an independent Scotland?

### Welfare state

An article in the *Glasgow Herald* suggested that if we became independent, Scotland would revert to the 'Nordic System'. How will this affect the current welfare state? And how long would this system take to implement?

### Media

Will the TV for Scotland change due to the TV licensing only being obliged [sic] to Great Britain?

## Appendix 2

# What do you want Scotland in 2020 to look like?

In workshop sessions led by the day's speakers, students were asked to discuss and present their blueprint for Scotland in 2020. They were asked to discuss the following:

**Imagine you are the government...**

- What would you keep?
- What would you change?

This is a compilation of the pupils' responses.

### Keep

Free education  
Free health care  
Taxation system  
Encouragement of youth (Olympics, this event, other sports events, BBC, musicians etc)

### Change

Foster ambition  
Greater decision making at local level eg health, community councils  
Better social care for all  
The benefits system: make it simpler and harder to abuse  
Benefits higher for less fortunate, lower for the more fortunate  
Immigration: too easy for immigrants to enter Scotland  
Free transport to school for all ages  
Gender equality  
More anti-smoking campaigns  
Warheads kept in Scotland  
Marriage laws change to 18+  
Age for joining the army 18+  
Equal rights for marriage  
Improve economy  
Trial different types of (renewable) energy, limit use of fossil fuels  
Equality for everyone: wages  
Work experience for everyone  
Minimum pricing for alcohol per unit  
Fairer prices for public transport  
Increase minimum wage

### What would we like Scotland to look like in 2020?

Everyone aged 16–18 should be in some sort of education whether it's school, college, training or employment  
Environmentally friendly society  
Freedom and rights  
Strong communities (social cohesion)  
Wider democracy – empowering the young  
Introduce entrepreneurial education in primary and secondary schools  
Eliminate crime and anti-social behaviour  
Address inequalities: abolish monarchy, abolish private schools, less tax poor / more rich  
Youth openly involved in all aspects of the professional world  
Pay should be equal for all ages  
More young people given a chance to contribute in their education  
Focus less on exams and more on education throughout the year  
No tuition fees  
More transport available (in rural areas)  
Political equality: votes at 16 for all elections  
Compulsory education and training for young offenders  
Good healthcare system  
Good education system  
More opportunities eg more university places  
Living wages  
High employment rate

## Appendix 3

# Key objects from the National Collections and what they tell us about the story of Scotland

Students were able to explore the museum collections as part of the event. These are some of the objects that tell key stories in Scotland's history.

**Which of these objects do you think are most relevant when considering Scotland's future?  
What other objects do you think we should have added?**



James Watt Statue  
*Grand Gallery, Level 1*



Lewis Chesspieces  
*The Kingdom of the Scots, Level 1*



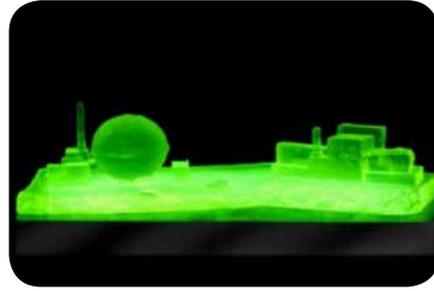
The Darien Chest  
*The Kingdom of the Scots, Level 1*



Hunterston Brooch  
*Early People, Level 0*



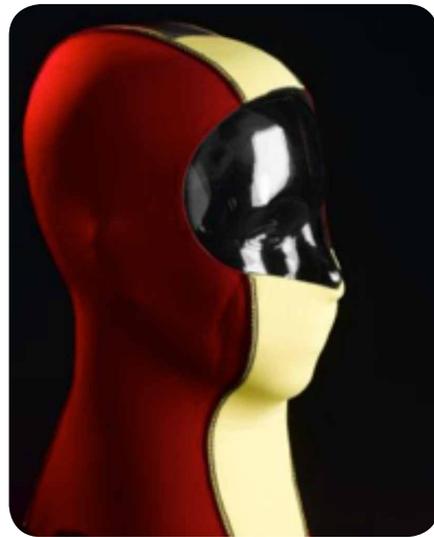
Dolly the Sheep  
*Connect Gallery, Level 1*



Sculpture of Dounreay power station  
*Scotland: A Changing Nation, Level 6*



Salter's Duck  
*Scotland: A Changing Nation, Level 6*



Oil Protection Cap  
*Scotland: A Changing Nation, Level 6*

**What object would you like to add?**